

# Positive+Parent™ Newsletter

Where the science of positive psychology+ meets the art of parenting™

Shaya Kass, PhD

[www.PositiveParentPlus.com](http://www.PositiveParentPlus.com)

## BE NICE!

Today I bent the truth to be kind, and I have no regret, for I am far surer of what is kind than I am of what is true. ~Robert Brault

I recently read a list of “101 Things You Should Do If You Are Divorced With Kids” or something like that. It was things like “Don’t ask your kids what happened at your ex’s house” and “Don’t fight in front of your kids”. Advice that is pretty commonsensical. I don’t think most people who are divorced need to be told this, but a reminder never hurts.

There was one thing missing that really bothered me. The list did not include being nice to your ex!

Of course, we all tell our kids that they should be nice to the people in their lives. It is easy to be nice to your friends, it actually comes quite naturally. If you ask most people why they are nice to their friends, they would have a hard time answering. Just like it is difficult to explain how to breathe! We just do it! We rarely have to remind our kids to be nice to their friends.

We sometimes have to remind our children to be nice to new people. For example, when a new kid joins the class we often encourage our children to make the first gesture of friendship. Here the obstacle is, perhaps, awkwardness. But there usually is not a lot of resistance.

So far, we see that it is easy to be nice to someone we like. And it is not difficult to be nice to someone “neutral”. Now comes the more difficult part.

The difficult part comes when there is someone we don’t like. Here is the real challenge and here is where the “teaching moment” with our kids comes in.

Yes, you should be nice to the people you don’t like. There are many benefits to being nice to people you don’t like, and the best possibility is that you will eventually like them and they will like you. Perhaps we don’t like them because of a misunderstanding that, once cleared up, can become a point of partnership and friendship.

Also, when you are nice to many people, you increase your social circle. Research has shown that having a bigger group of friends has many benefits in health and happiness. Other people will notice your extra effort and will be willing to help you when needed. You can also widen your sphere of influence this way and become the “go to” person.

I am, in no way, advocating that you tell your kids to become a “sucker” for other people. They can actually

extend a hand of friendship from a position of strength rather than a position of weakness. They don’t need the other person’s friendship, they are simply offering their own.

Of course, the best way to teach this is to model it for your children. And if you happen to be divorced, there would be so many benefits of acting this way. You would be teaching your children an important lesson, you would be lowering the stress with your ex, and you will truly be improving yourself!

This would truly be win, win, win all around!

Don't wait for people  
to be friendly, show  
them how.  
~Author Unknown